

THE REJUVENATION OF MR. SCHENCK By Mrs. F. M. Kingsley



NE cold, wet day last April, having just concluded an unsatisfactory amateurism with my old enemy, rheumatism, I was languidly looking over a list of health resorts. I had in mind the positive suggestion of my physician, who urged the necessity of a change of air and scene as the best ally of the array of pill boxes and medicine bottles which crowded my chimney piece.

The mountains of the Carolinas, Florida, California, and the lake regions of the middle west, hot springs, and mineral waters, I had tried them one and all with neither benefit nor pleasure. I said this to myself with a sigh and groan, as a sharper reality than common traversed my swollen limbs and diffused itself into a million of red-hot pin pricks in the joints of my great toe.

I rang the bell sharply, and Jones, my confidential servant, entered. "You've forgotten me, Jones," I said. "I was to have taken them at 10.30, and it's now 10.35 past. Confound you!" This last as a second, followed by a third and fourth, maddening throb played like forked lightning along my tortured nerves.

I irritably crumpled the paper I had been reading, and was on the point of tossing it into the glowing grate before me when my eye caught a word or two which arrested my hand.

"Dr. Ignatius Hemphill—
"Can positively turn back the hands on the dial of

wound up a steep, rough road between rows of dark trees, I believe it was raining.

About five minutes after we started a sound of uproarious laughter and wild yelling, which would have done credit to a horde of Comanche Indians, burst out on the road ahead of us.

"Shine foot college boys," shouted the fat man at my left. And indeed they were howling out that silly old song. "Here's to Doc, whoop her up!"

"Whoop her up!" indeed! I thought my sensitive ears would burst. I hate college boys! At this moment the carriage came abreast of the driver. "Here's old Jemmy and some new boys—hooray!" yelled a voice. "Get drivin' like a funeral procession, Jemmy! Come, bounce 'em up a bit, old boy; it'll do 'em good."

"They ain't up to it yet!" "Is it not?" shrieked the elderly female rising to clutch the driver from behind and stepping on my fine foot as she did so.

"Madam!" I cried, in tones which must have penetrated even that green veil, for she sat down again. "O no, madam, 'tain't nothin' to 'em," said the driver. "It's only some of the patients. They will have their little jokes, bless 'em."

"Jones," I said loudly, "tell that fellow to take me back to the station at once. I've no notion of spending even one night at a confounded child's hospital or a lunatic

"Your servant is laying out your dressing gown and slippers in your bedroom—just beyond," he said suavely.

To cut a long story short I said, and was soon seated before a capital little supper. Dr. Hemphill came in to see me again after I had eaten. I began to tell him something of my symptoms, but he said he knew at a glance what ailed me. I was possessed of an exquisitely sensitive nature, and had suffered from the stupid misapprehension of the world.

I grasped him warmly by the hand and gazed into his eyes with feelings too deep for words. My heaven! I cried, actually shaking with emotion, "you are positively the first human being I ever met who has displayed the first atom of comprehension of my case!"

"You are," continued the doctor, softly and still holding my hand affectionately in both of his own—most genial in your disposition, easily pleased, generous, and open hearted to a fault, joyous and happy, kind and considerate to all."

"I am—I am!" I almost sobbed, "but no one ever found it out before!"

I woke up once in the night with a pain in my foot, rang for Jones, and threw a water bottle at his head. "Remember, I leave this infernal hole at 7.30 in the morning," I yelled, and called him a number of bad names, every one of which the fellow richly deserved.

In the morning I found Jones standing at the bedside with my coffee. He looked scared. I invariably swear at

"Who could have been so thoughtless as to put pillow shams into this room?" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Ah, I see, it was a droll mistake of the chambermaid. These articles were intended for Miss Noble's apartment."

At this I laughed until I was positively unable to sit straight in my chair. It isn't so much what he says, but the way he says it that makes Hemphill so irresistible. When I had recovered myself Hemphill asked if I would like to play a game of marbles with him. I replied that I should be delighted to join him, but that I hadn't played much of late, and had somehow lost all my "mosses."

Hemphill offered to set me up for a nickel, and to George, I never laid my eyes on a slacker lot of martinet than he produced out of his breeches pockets! We played for keeps, and the doctor declared that I was the best he ever saw. And, indeed, I cleaned him out of every marble he had. After dinner I wrote a game with myself, and later with Judge Hackett. Last two laws and a china ally to Hackett.

We closed the evening with a little informal hop, a most enjoyable affair. I danced twice with Miss Artilla Noble. Artilla is such a sweet name! I slept capitally that night, and woke sharp at 7 o'clock, to find that Jones had laid out my golf suit. Jones is really growing into an invaluable servant.

I will say here and now that I never passed a pleasanter month in my life than I did at Hemphill's. There was a constant round of amusements, and in such variety, too. Mornings we played at golf, tennis, croquet, baseball, and even football. Hemphill declared that I was one of the best fellows for center he ever laid eyes on. I am simply immense when it comes to a tackle! Afternoons we indulged in boating, riding, walking, and once in a while I gave Hemphill's gardener a turn with the vegetables. I know a thing or two about gardening, and gave him a lot of points. Evenings we spent in dancing, games, and conversation. It was during these delightful days that I came to know and appreciate the sweet,

"I discovered these remarkable facts years ago, while figuring in Boston as a particularly successful practitioner among elderly people. I studied the astonishing phenomena of so-called second childhood, with its almost invariably restoration of sight, of hearing, and of appetite, which increased in precisely the ratio that mind and memory diminished."

Here, then, was the problem: How could I induce a mind still active to relinquish the disease-producing beliefs which are fearfully addicted to by almost every man and woman past middle life? How induce the happy, hopeful, exuberant condition of the child mind, in which the false reflection of sickness never lingers long unless—and mark my words well—unless it is, so to say, stunted there by the audacious ignorance and superstitious folly of older people?

I finally turned to the study of that wonderful but yet to be established science, hypnosis. Nay, ladies, I beg that you will not be alarmed. Kindly bear me to the end, I turned, I say, to the study of hypnosis, and found in a series of carefully conducted experiments that I was able to superimpose, perhaps, more accurately, supplant—with my own thought of youth and happiness the exhausted and enervated conditions existing in the minds of the sick and aged. Marvellous results followed. Sickness disappeared with astonishing speed; my patients literally drank of my hands

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Every word of your advertisement was a lie!

the century for you!" I read. "Old folks made young! All diseases of age, including rheumatism, gout, paralysis, wrinkles, dimness of vision, etc., etc., completely eradicated from the system within sixty days; no medicines, no operations! A safe and delightful method of cure. Spend two months with Dr. Hemphill in his charming mountain home, and go away thirty years younger than when you came! Send for the illustrated circular with over 100 bona fide testimonials."

I called myself a senile old fool, but I sent for a circular.

At the hour of 2 a. m. as I lay wearily watching the red glow of the wakened fire as it sported with the pale glimmer of the night lamp over the familiar faces and features of my bachelor bedroom, my mind again reverted to the glowing phraseology of Dr. Hemphill's advertisement. Again I called myself a senile old fool; Hemphill was undoubtedly an infernal quack.

Then my great toe playfully demanded my undivided attention. At the expiration of five minutes, which I filled with profanity, concentrated entirely upon Podagra, Jones, my physician, leaped into my mind again, and I have cut my oldest nephew out of my will because the fellow made an ashine pun about my lame foot, and expected me to grin at it. He'll laugh the other side of his mouth later on.

When we reached the little mountain station late that evening between exhaustion and pain I was in a pitiable condition. I think if I could have killed Jones in some lingering way it would have relieved me. The fellow expatiated me beyond measure by his coolness.

There were two persons in the waiting room when I hobbled in on the arm of Jones, a fat old man, and an elderly female in a mackintosh and green veil. This individual carried a parrot in a large cage, while six portcullis bundles dangled from various angles of her anatomy.

"My dear sir," she bleated, darting up to me, "can you tell us where I can find a conveyance which will take me to Dr. Ignatius Hemphill's sanitarium?"

I merely glanced at her, but Jones, who knows well enough what I think of females and parrots, answered with his usual slippery smoothness, "There will be a carriage on hand directly, madam."

A red faced man thrust his head in at the door at that moment and called out, "Carriage for Hemphill's, right this way!"

What I suffered in that vehicle, crowded up as I was between the elderly female with her parrot cage on the one side and the fat old man, who ground horribly at every joint, on the other, cannot be put into words. The road

to the asylum! For, if you will believe me, the creatures in the road had caught on to the back of the carriage and were howling. "Give us a ride, Jemmy, that's a good fellow! Give us a ride and we'll give you a chew of tobacco!"

Jones explained to me that there was no hotel in the neighborhood, and that we should be obliged to spend at least one night in the sanitarium.

"A good supper, sir, and a night's rest will put you into a better humor, sir," put in the driver. Impudent rascal, I could have choked him with pleasure.

There being no way out of it, I resolved to go on, but I told Jones on the spot that he must not unpack. To the driver I said sharply that he might as well hand for the first train in the morning. The fellow usually laughed in my face. "Mebbe you'll change yer mind, sir, after you've seen the doctor," he said. "There's Dr. Hemphill now on the steps a waitin' to see you."

In the half darkness I saw what appeared to be a house of some size, surrounded by lawns and shrubbery. I particularly dislike trees and shrubs; they harbor dampness.

"Mr. Peter Small, I believe," said the man pointed out as Dr. Hemphill, "and Miss Artilla Noble, and—ah, yes, I received your telegram, Mr. Isaac Schenck. I am most happy to receive you under my roof."

"I answer to the name of Schenck," I said dryly, "but before you receive me under your roof I should like to ask what sort of an establishment you call this?" For at that instant a tall man in spectacles darted out of the front door pursued by a plump old lady with her cap awry. The two were shrieking with laughter, and disappeared behind the house in a twinkling.

"There is surely some sort of mistake," I continued, raising my voice. "I am not in need of treatment for my vertebrae; I looked sharply into the wide hall as I spoke, where, as sure as I live, I saw two respectable looking elderly men playing at marbles on their hands and knees."

I turned resolutely round and called my servant. "I will not remain in this place a single hour," I said firmly, again addressing the doctor, "and I shall immediately report you to the police, sir. Every word of your advertisement was a lie—a damnable lie, sir, and you shall suffer for it as sure as my name is Schenck!" The woman with the parrot was whimpering dementally by this time, and the fat man had begun to splutter like an overcharged seltzer bottle.

Dr. Hemphill smiled and laid his hand upon my arm. "My dear sir," he said gently, "you have not even stepped inside the door of my house as yet. Do me the favor to precede me. Ah, yes—"

Curiously, if nothing more, had impelled me to step into the hall. The doctor threw open a door to the left; I looked in; there was a blaring fire, a small round table neatly set with service for one, and an appetizing odor of fried chicken.

"There will not be a penny of charge for supper and a night's lodging," the doctor was saying. I glanced around and beheld the elderly woman and the fat man disappearing down the corridor in charge of a white capped maid.

Where is Jones? I asked sharply. "I won't be left here alone—not a minute!"

Again the doctor touched me lightly on the shoulder.

Jones when he looks scared. I swore at him now. "What time is it, you insufferable blockhead?" I demanded. Then I turned to meet the smiling eyes of Dr. Hemphill.

"It is exactly 10.45 o'clock, my dear sir," he said. "Confound your impudence!" I yelled—or words to that effect. "Didn't I tell you last night that I wanted to get the 7.30 train?"

The doctor looked at me fixedly for a moment. He is a tall man, with remarkably large and piercing eyes. "You must be thinking of yesterday, my dear Mr. Schenck," said he pleasantly. "Just now you were intending to drink a cup of this excellent coffee and afterwards to join me in a game of golf."

Now golf is the only out of door game I ever could abide. I took the coffee from Jones' hand and drank it slowly. "Have you a decent link?" I asked. "I hate and despise a rough—"

"You are entirely mistaken, my dear Mr. Schenck," said the doctor cheerfully. "You are only joking when you say it. But then you always were fond of your fun; I can read it in your face!" He laid his hand on my shoulder as he spoke.

I laughed till I choked in my coffee as I looked at him. I declare it would have tickled a dead man to see the twinkle in Hemphill's eyes. "By George, doctor, you are right!" I cried joyously. "Jones, you lazy rascal, lay out my golf togs; I'll join you, Hemphill, in a jiffy."

Jones still looked so scared I made no link again. I sprang out of bed and slapped him on the shoulder. "You're a capital valet, Jones," I said, winking at the doctor, "but a trifle too solemn and slow to suit me! Come now, get a move on you, old boy!"

My acquaintances of the previous evening, Miss Artilla Noble and Small, joined us on the links. I was struck with the lady's graceful figure and handsome face. I was obliged to catch her a trifle on the proper use of the sticks; it is her first season. Small turns out to be a capital fellow; a knowing player, too. We passed a most enjoyable morning. Strangely enough I felt no pain in my foot over the entire course.